

HAER
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STAR UNION BEER COMPANY,
BREWERY AND BOTTLING WORKS
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
102 Pike Street
Peru
LaSalle County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-86

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

STAR UNION BEER COMPANY, BREWERY AND BOTTLING WORKS
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
102 Pike Street
Peru, LaSalle County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.321500 N. 4576460
Quad: Spring Valley

Date of Construction: 1892, 1909

Builder: Unknown

Present Status: Brewery destroyed; bottling works vacant

Significance: The Star Union Beer Company, acquired by Henry Hoerner in 1880, was one of the largest breweries in Illinois after the end of prohibition.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.

Historian: Gray Fitzsimons, 1985.

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The original brewery was established in 1845 by Fred Kaiser and incorporated as the Union Beer Company in 1868. In 1880 the company was acquired by Henry Hoerner who renamed it the Star Union Beer Company. Hoerner served as President and General Manager of the company until 1930. In 1920, in response to prohibition, Star Union installed an ice maker and began to manufacture root beer. The bottling works was built between 1892 and 1909 and expanded to the west in 1909 and 1916. It reached its present size by 1926. In 1927 the name was again changed to the Star Union Products Company. After prohibition was repealed, Star Union became one of the largest breweries in Illinois, with over 100 employees by 1935. The plant closed in 1966. From 1966 to 1981 the bottling department housed Dresbach Beer Distributors. The brewery complex, west at 101 Pike Street, was razed in the early 1970s. The former bottling plant and warehouse is now vacant.

The complex once serving as a bottling plant and warehouse is a two-story structure composed of three sections. The main block was built in 1892 and 1909 and contains a stone foundation and common-bond brick load-bearing walls. The building is a rectangular plan with a flat roof, brick parapet wall, and corbeled brick cornice. Windows at the first-floor level contain brick segmental arches and stone lug sills. These windows are now boarded-up. The second story contains two-over-two-light, double-hung, sash windows with brick segmental arches and stone lug sills. A loading dock of reinforced concrete and an aluminum canopy run the length of the main facade. A one-and-one-half story brick addition adjoins the north facade.

SOURCES:

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Nancy Chadbourne Maze, ed., Tales and Pictures of Peru (Peru, IL: W.H. Maze Co., 1985).

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